

Tenure No Longer Protects Creationist Professors

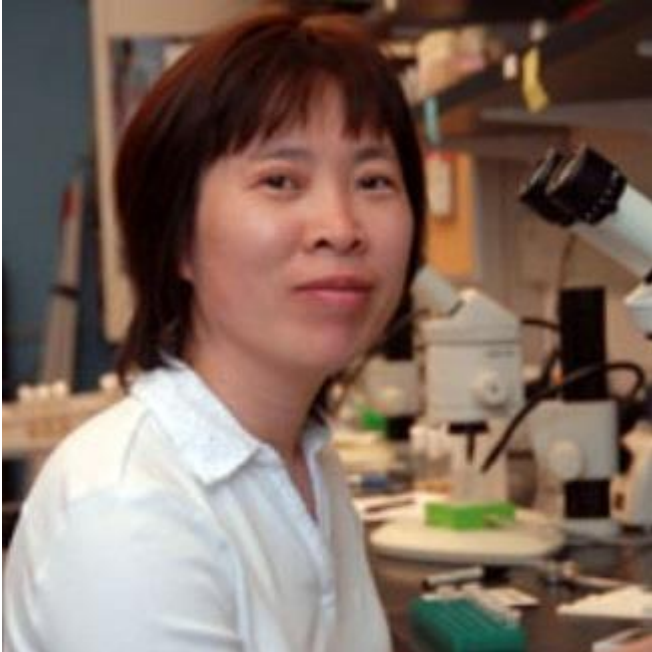
*Professor Change Laura Tan expelled:
A new book about a new case*

Tenure no longer protects creationist professors!^[1]

by Jerry Bergman, PhD

In the past, the major problem experienced by those who rejected Darwinism based on science was denial of tenure. Tenure was generally an effective protection against termination based on one's conclusions about Darwinism, but *not any longer*. A new book about a tenured professor expelled for a scientific discovery which created major problems for Darwinism documents this reality. The case involves Professor Change Laura Tan, formally a tenured associate professor teaching molecular biology at the University of Missouri. Her bachelor's degree was in chemistry and her M. S. degree was in physical-organic chemistry. Next followed a Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania in biochemistry (developmental biology), and a post doc in genetics at Harvard Medical School.

Dr. Tan's Educational and Research Background



Dr. Change Laura Tan

Dr. Tan was born and raised in mainland China. She first learned about Darwin's theory of evolution when she was in middle school in China. Professor Tan accepted without question the idea that humans were only a type of animal. She was taught that life came from non-life and that complicated life came from simple life. Humans evolved from some ape ancestor and there was no God and no creator.

Dr. Tan became a Christian in 2004. However, she remained an evolutionist after she became a Christian because she believed that it was supported by factual science. It was only when she began to teach molecular biology at the University of Missouri in 2006 that she began to question the theory. She taught molecular biology for sixteen years and began writing a molecular biology textbook,

forcing her to think critically about the theory. While teaching and doing research, she learned that the genes involved in DNA replication, transcription, and translation in the three domains of life, i. e., bacteria, archaea, and eukaryotes, are all very distinct.

This was clear evidence that prokaryotes did not evolve into eukaryotes as Darwinism teaches. Furthermore, the three domains of life could not share a common ancestor, a conclusion based on the fact that *most of the essential genes are domain-of-life specific*. Therefore, an impassable gap exists between prokaryotes and eukaryotes.^[2]

The more she studied and researched genes and genomes of different organisms, the more she became convinced that organisms on Earth are much better represented diagrammatically as a forest of separate phylum trees, instead of only one phylogenetic evolutionary tree, as taught by orthodox Darwinism. Her first response was that maybe her knowledge about evolution was out of date since, up to this time, she had never formally studied evolution. Like so many others, she had taken evolution as a given.

The Evidence of Orphan Genes Against Darwinism

She also studied *orphan genes*, genes unique to a specific species and not found in other species. Professor Tan documented the distribution of homologs of all genes encoded in 317 model organisms, thereby showing that approximately 29.8 percent of the total protein-coding genes were orphan genes while < 0.01% were universal genes (genes with homologs in each of the 317 species she analyzed).^[3]

As she analyzed genomes, the sum total of universal and nearly-universal genes plateaued, while that of orphan and nearly-orphan genes grew continuously. When the species numbers compared increased to 3,863 bacteria, 711 eukaryotes, and 179 archaea, *not one of the universal genes remained universal*. In other words, all genes are taxonomically restricted, though at different taxonomic levels. *This was a stunning indictment of evolution and the exact opposite of what evolution predicted!*

During this time she continued to research the problem, concluding that certain required evolutionary steps were impossible, including the evolution of prokaryotes to eukaryotes, of unicellular organisms to multi-cellular organisms, and of asexual reproduction to sexual reproduction.

Looking for Counter Evidence

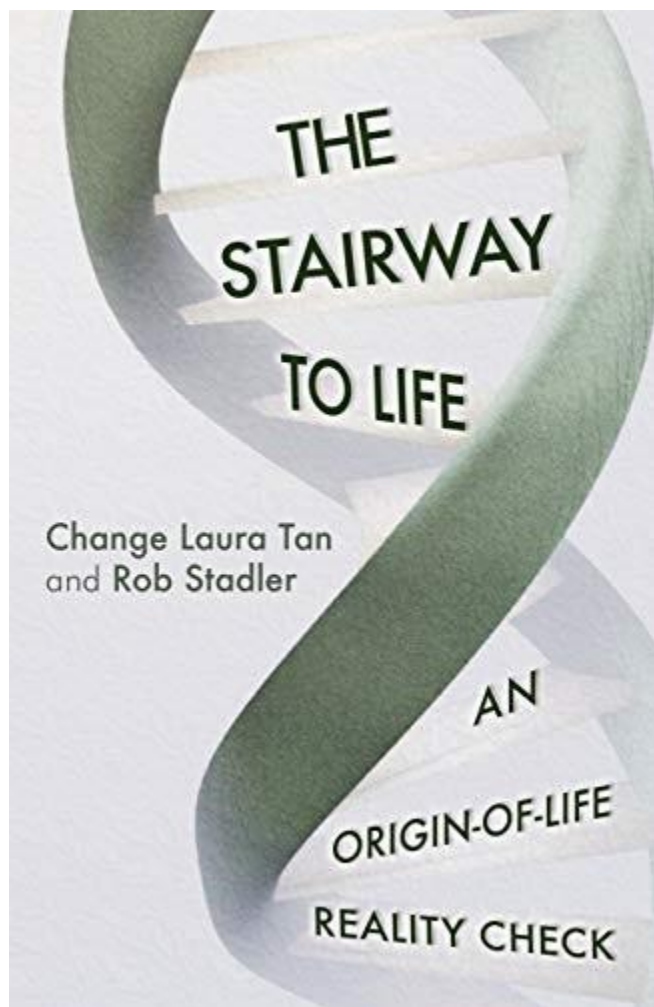
As with any other area of scientific research, Professor Tan scoured the literature to determine if someone else had made the same discovery. As she delved into the literature on evolution, she found that many articles were difficult to read, the opposite of what she felt when she read other scientific articles. Very different standards are used in the field of evolution than in other research fields. Assumptions, perspectives, and imaginary explanations are often presented as facts.

Each time she taught molecular biology she faced the same problem, reviewing the details of DNA replication, transcription, RNA processing, and translation, and then facing the irreconcilable chasm between prokaryotes and eukaryotes. Furthermore, in the laboratory, she regularly did gene cloning and protein expression, both of which require matching vectors and hosts. She also became convinced that life coming from non-life was impossible, as it also was impossible for eukaryotes to have evolved from prokaryotes, both of which secular biology textbooks teach as scientific facts.^[4]

Professor Tan soon realized that there exists a wealth of paleontological, molecular, statistical, phenotypical, genomic, and histological data demonstrating that Darwin's theory of evolution (and the modern synthesis) has reached its dead-end. However, nobody had clearly and systematically assembled all the pieces. Most people are busy learning about the details of life, taking evolution as a given. Indeed, evolution is regarded as the foundation of biology by many.

Some Bible believers accept Darwin's evolution theory, but after many years of research she found that her science agreed with her Bible. Unfortunately, this conclusion was not only *not welcome* in the biological science community, but it also ended her career. She understands that she is running against a strong current and may be disliked and mistreated. However, as a scientist, and a pursuer of truth, she felt compelled to follow the evidence wherever it led.

Problems Began



The cover of her book that caused her major problems.

A major problem was that her opponents knew that she was publishing articles critical of evolutionary naturalism in the *Answers Research Journal* (a scientific journal published by Answers in Genesis) from 2015 through 2016 because Tan included them in her list of accomplishments. One of her main co-authors on these articles was Jeffrey P. Tomkins who was the head of the genetics lab at Clemson University before he retired. Having much experience with peer review, she also knew that the peer-review process of *Answers Research Journal* was every bit as rigorous, if not more so, than the

secular reviewers she had experienced at Harvard and elsewhere. Her peer-reviewed book on the origin of life was co-authored with Dr. Rob Stadler. He received a B.S. in biomedical engineering from Case Western Reserve University, an M.S. in electrical engineering from MIT, and a Ph.D. in medical engineering from Harvard/MIT. Their book was very well received, as of January 7, 2023, earning 115 reviews on Amazon, with 90 percent three-star ratings or better, and 80 percent 5-stars.^[5] It was also obvious to me that most of the authors of the negative reviews had never read the book and their reviews consisted mostly of ad hominem innuendos. One example of such fallacious attacks is the following:

Disguising the fact that a book is theistic in order to increase sales is deceitful. It is lying, it is theft, and it is disgraceful. Theists are now using such deception to get their 'very important' message to humanity. We have now had over 2,000 years of the burning of scientists at the stake, holy wars, massacres, the prevention of scientific advancement, and religious idiocy. We've gotten the message, you don't have to trick us with manipulated book descriptions lacking full divulgence in order to get us into Sunday School to hear the same tired message again.^[6]

Truth be told, not a single scientist was ever burned at the stake, according to science historian Ronald Numbers,^[7] and religion was historically one of the strongest supporters of science.^[8] In fact, Christianity birthed modern science! [See CEH's list of creation scientists.]

Knowing she was challenging a theory cherished by many, Dr. Tan was more careful with data when researching on the issues challenging the view of Darwinian evolution than with genetics or developmental biology, her former research focus. Before she switched her research direction from oogenesis to the origin of life, she asked Dr. John Walker, her department chairman, for permission.

In response to this request, her supervisor asked her to give a talk in the faculty-to-faculty seminar about her interests. In retrospect, it appears that his suggestion was a subtle way to prevent her from researching this area. After that conversation Walker attempted to stop her from pursuing any research against Darwinism. That was difficult because her research goal was not directed toward disproving evolution. It was focused on learning about the molecular details of DNA replication, transcription, and translation, which, in turn, led her away from evolution.

Persecution Accelerates

In December 2014, now that knowledge of her "heresy" was public, her laboratory and office were moved from a modern and well-equipped building, to a Lefevre Research Laboratory (University of Missouri College of Arts and Sciences), an old and deteriorated room with a disgustingly stained laboratory floor.

Subsequently, the interim dean at the time, Dr. Cooper Drury, informed her that the University decided to dismiss her for cause, claiming unsatisfactory performance. At that time she had 39 publications, 1,239 citations, and 88,915 reads. She was one of the most productive associate professors, with excellent student ratings during her last few years. Nonetheless, her peers disparaged any publication that took umbrage with Darwinism. She would have been better off to have published nothing rather than authoring publications that critically evaluated evolutionism. The fact is that, in the period when she was given an unsatisfactory five-year post tenure evaluation (2013-2017), of the 35 total faculty members in her department, she had more peer-reviewed publications than the majority of faculty members.

Show Trial Like the Inquisition

The interim dean, Dr. Cooper Drury, said that she could resign to avoid the dismissal process, or she could request a hearing. She requested a hearing and was told that she could bring a lawyer, or an advisor, to the hearing, but she decided against this option, which she soon realized was a mistake. She entered the hearing with little idea about what would transpire. In addition to members of the University of Missouri Campus Faculty Committee on Tenure, there were a court reporter, a videographer, and several lawyers in the room. In fact, both her dean and the chairperson are lawyers, the committee had a lawyer counsel, and her dean had a lawyer who had two helping lawyers. The charges for which she was being fired were vague, specifically that there was

“adequate cause for dismissal related directly and substantially to your fitness or performance in a professional capacity of teacher or researcher.” [And for] failing to “perform her responsibilities in research at levels satisfactory to maintain her tenured appointment.”

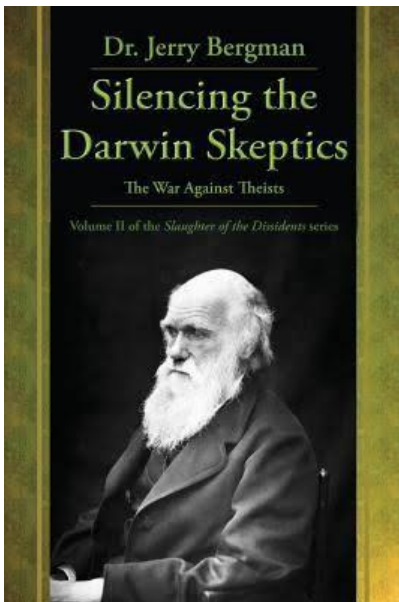
It was clear from her academic hearing that the root issue was her molecular biology research which showed that the life-from-non-life belief and the evolutionary notion that eukaryotes evolved from prokaryotes were both at odds with the experimental evidence. Her response was to affirm that

these evaluations are the product of an orthodoxy that censors challenges to an explanation of the origin of life and its diversity held by my department Director and Personnel Committee, as well as the product of actions taken to censor and prevent my research about origins. The censorship violates Academic Freedom, what the tenure system at the University of Missouri aims to protect and what is essential to good science and good science education. In short, the key issue is about Organism-specific Genetic Information Coding and Decoding and its challenge to the current popular belief about life, origin of life, and origin of biodiversity.

The committee also claimed that

Professor Tan failed to contribute research, peer-reviewed journals, and failed to raise any research funding... University of Missouri uses indicators to determine the quality of research and education. These indicators include faculty research published in journals that are found in Thomson Reuters InCites database, the database that houses thousands of journals.

The Catch-22



The university knew, or should have known, that the likelihood of an out-of-the-closet creationist publishing in peer-reviewed secular journals is essentially zero.^[9] And, if by some chance she did manage to publish in one of their journals, the article very likely would have been withdrawn when the evolutionary establishment monitors became aware of it.^[10] Her opening statement in her defense is here:

“the evaluations are factually incorrect and in direct conflict with the Division of Biological Sciences’ guidelines for review and the evaluation of faculty productivity. My publications mostly are in respected peer-reviewed journals. And especially, if you look at the teaching evaluation, that, we should say, is very objective — We’re all looking at the MIZZOU students’ evaluations — You can see how my teaching, based on the evaluations of the students, has increased greatly in the past couple of years. As of last semester, it reaches four point nine something over five. But that evaluation from my Department Director and the Personnel Committee was “unsatisfactory.”

Professor Tan then added that her publications were

peer-reviewed. So, these evaluations are not factually correct. They are efforts to ... censor challenges to an explanation of the origin of life and its diversity held by my department Director and Personnel Committee. The censorship violates the principles of good science and good science education, the academic freedom and non-discrimination policies of this University, various provisions of the 1st and the 14th Amendments of the U. S. Constitution that prohibit a state from endorsing or abridging a particular religious viewpoint, similar provisions in the Constitution and Statutes of the State of Missouri, the CRRs of the University, and the DBS guidelines. Therefore, I would like to urge you to investigate the issue carefully and thoroughly and to judge objectively, for the sake of yourself, the University, and the State and the U. S. Constitutions.

She then presented some of the evidence she found that led her to question Darwinism, noting that “a comparison of RNA polymerases, (the enzymes used to synthesize RNA using DNA as a template)” reveals that

bacterial RNA polymerase is made of four different proteins and five different subunits. Bacteria use one single RNA polymerase to synthesize all their RNAs. Eukaryotes, on the other hand, use at least

three different RNA polymerases. So, eukaryotic RNA polymerase shown here is the simplest one — that's RNA polymerase II — which is used for Eukarya to transcribe their protein-coding genes, it is made up of 12 different proteins. But for bacteria, the core enzyme is made of four proteins. It needs help from one additional protein to perform the basal level of transcription. But a eukaryotic polymerase, RNA polymerase II specifically here, needs help from many different proteins here. There are actually 43 different proteins involved, the whole thing contains 49 different subunits. So, I can logically conclude that bacteria and eukarya have their own way of transcribing their genes. Eukarya RNA polymerases are much more complicated. Even though they're much more complicated—they're made of many more different proteins—they need help from many more proteins than the bacterial ones do.

Academic Blindness

No one could dispute the facts she presented. Furthermore, *they had no interest in the facts*. She did not believe in Darwinism and that was her problem. Period. In her defense one professor noted, paraphrasing

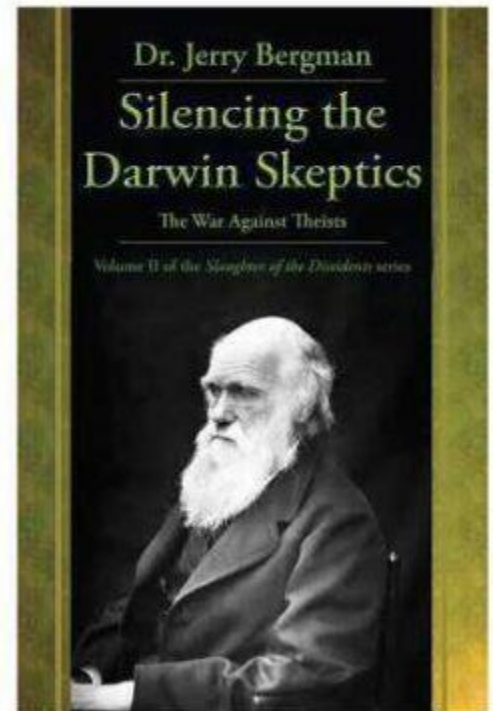
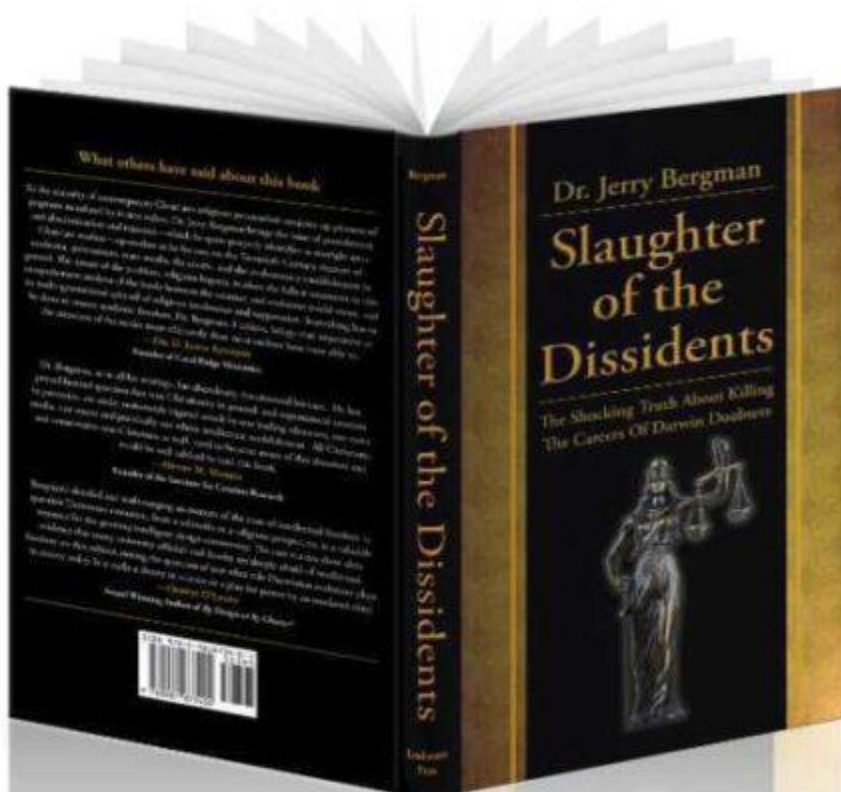
When I look at her résumé, I see she earned a Ph.D. from University of Pennsylvania and a post doctorate at Harvard University. She is a serious scientist, just as serious as Professor Barbara McClintock. But before she [McClintock] was awarded a Nobel Prize, she had difficulty publishing her papers in mainstream journals and getting grants because of her point of view. She couldn't get tenure here at the University of Missouri. So right now maybe her [Tan's] papers are not in the mainstream journals because the community is not happy with her ideas.

Judgment Rendered

On June 29, 2022, the Board of Curators informed her that they had decided “to sustain the decision by the Hearing Committee” to dismiss her. Her response was:

I researched and wrote articles on how genes demonstrate that it is impossible for life having come from non-life and eukaryotes having evolved from prokaryotes, but those articles could not be published in mainstream journals, and, thus, I could not get federal research funds and could not support students or postdoctoral fellows. Meanwhile, my supervisors were offended because my conclusions challenge their cherished view of life and its origin. With more than ten years' efforts, a condition was generated so that the University could dismiss me for cause. Even though the charge was done prematurely, they succeeded.

Evolution has now become the enemy of evidence-based science concerning origins. Tan's experience may place her as the 'Galileo' of evolution's war on Darwin skeptics. The problem is that, we as a society, allow such travesties to occur over and over again. The facts that Dr. Change Tan uncovered, however, will not change. They will exist forever to falsify Darwin's theory.



References

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- [5] Tan, Change Laura, and Rob Stadler. *The Stairway To Life: An Origin-Of-Life Reality Check*. Evorevo Books, Bucharest, Romania; <https://www.amazon.com/Stairway-Life-Origin-Life-Reality-ebook/dp/B085VDGTWM/>, 2020.
- [6] <https://www.amazon.com/Stairway-Life-Origin-Life-Reality-ebook/dp/B085VDGTWM/>.
- [7] Ungureanu, James C. Myths about Science and Religion: That Giordano Bruno was the First Martyr of Modern Science; <https://jamescungureanu.com/2013/04/04/myths-about-science-and-religion-that-giordano-bruno-was-the-first-martyr-of-modern-science/>, 2020.
- [8] See Numbers, Ron. *Galileo Goes to Jail and Other Myths about Science and Religion*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2009.
- [9] Bergman, Jerry. *Silencing the Darwin Skeptics: The War Against Theists*, 396 pages. Leafcutter Press, Southworth, Washington, 2016.
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